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**Environment Department Issues Drinking-Water Advisory for Nitrate Levels at
La Familia Medical Center**

(Santa Fe, NM) –The New Mexico Environment Department's (NMED) Drinking Water Bureau has issued an advisory for a nitrate drinking water violation at the La Familia Medical Center, located at 2145 Caja Del Oro Grant Road in Santa Fe. The Department advised the center's officials to prohibit the consumption of all water by patients, medical staff, and others who may have access to the water at the medical center, especially infants under six months old, pregnant women or those having specific health concerns.

The violation was due to an exceedance of the maximum contaminant level (MCL) for nitrate in drinking water. This MCL for nitrate in drinking water is 10 milligrams/liter (mg/L) as established by federal and state drinking water regulations. Results from two water tests completed at the water system over the last two weeks indicated nitrate levels of 10.60 mg/L and 10.36 mg/L respectively.

Elevated levels of nitrate in drinking water are a serious health concern for infants. Children below the age of six months who drink water containing nitrate in excess of the MCL could become seriously ill and, if not treated, could die. Symptoms include shortness of breath and a blue or gray coloring of the skin (often referred to as "blue baby syndrome"). Symptoms in infants can develop rapidly, with health deteriorating over a period of days. Although infants under six months are at greatest risk, pregnant and nursing women and children under 8 years of age should limit their intake of the water until nitrate levels decrease. If symptoms occur, seek medical attention immediately.

Consumers of water at the La Familia Medical Center should **NOT** boil the water, as boiling concentrates the nitrates. Water, juice, and formula for children under six months of age should not be prepared with tap water from this system. Bottled water or other water from an approved water source will be provided until further notice.

NMED Drinking Water Bureau staff will continue to monitor the La Familia Medical Center water system on a regular basis and provide technical assistance. Such assistance will help identify and eliminate possible sources of contamination, identify alternative water sources available, and recommend treatment options for the water system.

For additional information, contact Chris Serazio, Environmental Specialist, NMED, at (505) 827-1400 x.1031, or Jon Goldstein, NMED Communications Dir., at (505) 827-0314.

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